

Alberta On Scene



FOR PARTNERS IN FIRE AND
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN ALBERTA

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MAY 2010

3minutedrill update

Agency wins five advertising awards

THE ALBERTA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY'S very effective 3minutedrill campaign is now also an award-winning campaign. It took top honours in five categories in the Advertising Club of Edmonton (ACE) awards celebration on Saturday March 6, 2010.

Celebrating creativity in the advertising industry, the ACE awards are chosen each year. This year's event took place at the Shaw Conference Centre.

The campaign was submitted by RED the Agency, and came away with the following five awards:

- Best advertising campaign
- Best exhibit/point of purchase
- Best non-traditional
- Best public service broadcast
- Best television single under \$50,000



Accepting the award for RED The Agency are Creative Director Ryan Kelly and Associate Creative Director Dennis Lenarduzzi.



From left: Creative Director Ryan Kelly, Associate Creative Director Dennis Lenarduzzi and Account Executive Alana Williams.



Mahendra
Wijayasinghe,
Manager, Research
and Analysis,
Alberta Emergency
Management Agency and

Jessica Spratt, Public Affairs Officer with Alberta Municipal Affairs Communications Branch attended the event.

Congratulations go out to Jessica and Mahendra as well as to Chris Tye, Executive Director, Safety Services Branch, Alberta Municipal Affairs and Russell Croome, Fire Prevention Officer, Edmonton Fire Rescue Services for their contributions to the successful campaign!

If you'd like to see the dramatic TV ad that was the centerpiece of the campaign, go to: www.youtube.com/watch?v=q5DAwQSYiEQ

See the campaign website at: www.3minutedrill.alberta.ca

This is the sixth
issue of *On Scene*.
Let us know
what you think,
write to:
aema@gov.ab.ca

Government of Alberta

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A recipe for going from good to great

ONE OF THE BIGGEST challenges an organization faces is to go from good to great.

Think about that statement.

At first, it seems absurd that once you have become good that the rest of the journey toward becoming great would be difficult, but it is. “Good enough” is far too easy a statement to make and, for those who are not inspired to greatness, it is far too easy a statement to accept. “Good enough” is never spoken by a leader of an organization because once it is, that leader has lost his or her ability and right to lead the organization.

“Together, the agency and our partners can work to build a system that is not just good, but great.”

So what does it take? In my opinion, the recipe calls for a number of ingredients and just the right environment. Here are my ideas.

Individuals in the organization need commitment, courage, focus, humility, integrity, optimism and perseverance. Individuals also need to be life-long learners. Finally, the individuals must understand “team” and be willing to sacrifice their personal career advancement, in exchange for the success of the organization.


The environment needs to be one where there is a constant pursuit of excellence, and where mediocrity is not accepted at any level. The environment has to be one where leaders’ roles and responsibilities are well understood and there is a clearly defined mission and mandate. It is a work



Dave Hodgins

environment where continuous improvement is so embedded in the culture that it becomes second nature to always look for better ways.

In an organization that is responsible for public safety, “good enough” is not good enough. The public demands and deserves great service because their lives and property are at stake. Together, the agency and our partners can work to build a system that is not just good, but great. We can accomplish this through sharing information, experiences, advice and ideas as we do at the agency’s annual summit that is attended by approximately 400 representatives from our key stakeholders group.

“If you’re doing something you care that much about, and you believe in its purpose deeply enough, then it is impossible to imagine not trying to make it great.” 

E. David Hodgins, S.B.St.J., B. App.Bus:E.S., CEM
Managing Director,
Alberta Emergency Management Agency

The 2010 Summit will be held in Edmonton, November 8 - 10, 2010. We are looking forward to continuing to build a great system with you.

Strengthening emergency management teamwork

BY TOM COX, Emergency Management Training Officer, Alberta Emergency Management Agency

The 2010 Government of Alberta (GoA) Emergency Partners Symposium was held March 10, 2010 at the Ramada Inn in Edmonton. Approximately 130 government Consequence Management Officers, partner/ministry field staff and Alberta Emergency Management Agency representatives attended. Manmeet Bhullar, Parliamentary Assistant for Municipal Affairs represented the Honourable Hector Goudreau and opened the session. As well, Janice Sarich, the Parliamentary Assistant for Education spoke to the symposium.

The goal of the 2010 GoA Emergency Partners Symposium was to strengthen the GoA Emergency Management teamwork and increase response effectiveness/readiness. To achieve this goal, the 2010 Symposium looked at the planning and response activities of the government response system as identified in the Alberta Emergency Plan. The day included scenario-based activities using a simulation capability and emphasized unified decision making, collaborative planning and process management.

Presentations from Alberta Health and Wellness, Agriculture and Rural Development, Sustainable Resource



Tina Maslyk, Emergency Planning Coordinator, Alberta Health and Wellness



Brad Andres, Emergency Management Coordinator, Agriculture and Rural Development



Dave Hodgins, AEMA Managing Director



Manmeet Bhullar, Parliamentary Assistant for Municipal Affairs

Development, Environment, Solicitor General and Public Security, Service Alberta, Transportation and the Energy Resources Conservation Board brought attendees up to date in recent organizational changes, capabilities to respond to events, legislative responsibilities and role within the Alberta emergency management framework.

Additionally, a series of simulations based on previous emergencies experienced in Alberta (wildfires near Slave Lake, the Edmonton tornado and a sour gas well blow out west of Edmonton) allowed participants to discuss the roles of their

ministries and collaborate to determine what resources might be brought to bear on a significant event.

These simulations are important for highlighting issues and proposing solutions, but equally important is the chance to develop working relationships and understandings that can speed up the response to any significant event. As one expert in emergency management said, "Five minutes before the party is no time to learn to dance ..." Many participants commented on the importance of meeting their counterparts in other ministries and maintaining good working relationships.



Participants at the 2010 Emergency Partners Symposium.



From left right: Janice Sarich, the Parliamentary Assistant for Education; Dave Hodgins AEMA Managing Director; and Manmeet Bhullar, Parliamentary Assistant for Municipal Affairs.

The 2010 Government of Alberta Emergency Partners Symposium was hosted by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency in their role as a coordinating agency for the Government of Alberta's emergency response. 🔥

Prepared to respond

BY CHAD SCHAPPY

ON FEBRUARY 24, 2010 at 6:04 a.m., an Alberta Environment regional responder was deployed as a result of an emergency response. The Alberta Environment Support and Emergency Response Team (ASERT) had been notified about a major blowout at a gas well near the Town of Hythe in northwest Alberta. The regional responder that deployed to the site was prepared and ready to react at a moment's notice.

Alberta Environment employs a 24/7 emergency response presence and has the capability to respond

anywhere within the province. Alberta Environment's emergency response team is trained to an industry standard to help prepare them for these types of incidents. Responders are exercised and routinely participate in many local, provincial and private emergency response events. All of this results in a level of preparedness that is expected by the citizens of Alberta.

The Mobile Air Monitoring Lab

When the regional responder arrived, Canadian Natural Resources Limited (CNRL), owner of the well, was already on site, as was the Energy Resources Conservation Board and the local fire

“ Alberta Environment employs a 24/7 emergency response presence...”

department. Alberta Environment's Mobile Air Monitoring Laboratory (MAML) was en-route and ASERT was coordinating efforts behind the scenes.

The fire, which started in the early morning hours, consumed the derrick and rig buildings around the well site. Although the fire didn't encompass a large land area, it did produce a great deal of smoke and there was worry of hydrogen sulphide leaks. Containing the fire would prove a difficult task, one that would require the skills of a variety of professionals.

A monitoring technologist with Alberta Environment arrived with the MAML early on in the incident. The mobile air monitoring lab is sent to emergencies like the well blowout in Hythe to support air monitoring activities. Emergency crews and people near a fire scene need to know whether or not air quality is affected – if the MAML shows poor air quality, safety measures can be implemented to minimize health effects. Having highly accurate and sensitive air quality data provides the department, responders and partner agencies information that is fundamental in conducting an effective response to emergencies.

Over the next few days, emergency responders, monitoring staff and agency partners worked to get the fire stabilized. The coordinated effort between industry, ASERT, regional responders and other agencies is key to a quick, organized response to emergency situations like the blow-out on February 24.



Early on in the incident the plume from the blowout was visible from afar.



ASERT's Sprinter Van was deployed to the blowout providing a mobile operations centre.

“In the event the magnitude of an incident warrants it, Alberta Environment is capable of deploying regional responders, technical staff and other emergency response expertise, including staff from ASERT, to help address the greatest and most serious on-site issues.”

Addressing on-site issues

In the event the magnitude of an incident warrants it, Alberta Environment is capable of deploying regional responders, technical staff and other emergency response expertise, including staff from ASERT, to help address the greatest and most serious on-site issues. On February 24th, ASERT, Grande Prairie district compliance along with the air monitoring and water monitoring teams worked together to ensure public safety and the protection of the environment.

During an oil and gas incident, a timely, coordinated and effective response is essential to protecting the public, the environment and Alberta's resources. ASERT and regional responders are a major part of that response.

Alberta Environment provided support and an emergency response presence at the Regional Emergency Operations Centre until the incident threat was downgraded to an acceptable level. CNRL was successful in gaining control of the well and reducing the threat level of the incident in mid March. 🔥



Alberta Environment's air monitoring staff operating the Mobile Air Monitoring Laboratory (MAML).

Doing what comes naturally

From fighting forest fires to teaching fire prevention and safety, Dan Kootenay has had a very interesting career to date. As a young native child growing up on the Alexis First Nation reserve near Alberta Beach, west of Edmonton, Dan spent much of his time dealing with nature.

In the summer of 1959, his first employment was as a firefighter then a certified crew boss in the Swan Hills area, at a time when there were no roads leading into Swan Hills. Dan says it was a very rewarding job. Being with nature is something that comes naturally to Dan. His hobbies are fishing, hunting and just enjoying the wilderness. He even has a cabin in the woods near Rocky Mountain House that he refers to as his second home. It has no electricity, and he tries to get there as often as possible for as many days as possible.

After working in construction for a few years, Dan enrolled in NAIT to become a carpenter. After graduation, he then worked for the housing program with the Alexis Nation.

In 1988, when he accepted the Fire Advisor position with the Yellowhead Tribal Council (YTC), he went back to school again. This time it was the Fire Training School in Vermilion, where he studied building and fire codes and fire behaviours in different environments.

Dan points out that his previous education and experience with carpentry was very beneficial too. “Being a carpenter, I knew about structures and building materials. I also knew about the gases in building materials and what do about them.”

In his current position, Dan works with five bands – the Alexander, Alexis, Enoch, Sunchild and Ochese. Each band has a part-time fire chief, except for Enoch, which has a full time fire chief. It also has the largest fire department of the five bands.

In his role as fire advisor for the YTC, Dan’s responsibilities include fire brigade teaching. “I train six new people each year,” stated Dan. He also coordinates fire safety inspections in public buildings with the federal government. “We have a contract with the

federal government to do inspections about once a year for the YTC. I act like the German Shepard dog that follows them around, helping steer where they go,” he laughs. “The inspections include schools, daycares, seniors lodges and homes for people with physical or mental disabilities.”

Dan also does follow-up reports after the inspections, which often includes sitting with the various groups to explain what needs to be changed or updated. “I help them remedy the deficiencies,” adds Dan.

Dan also uses his position to provide fire safety education and awareness. Dan starts with the children in the fall each year, using the Fire Prevention Week (FPW) materials provided by the former Fire Commissioner’s Office and the AEMA more recently. He adds to those materials Sparky the Dog videos to teach the A, B, Cs of Fire Safety and the FPW poster contest. “What the children put on their posters helps me know their level of fire knowledge and prevention,” adds Dan. “I also discuss with the teachers about judging the posters within each year’s theme.”

Dan also likes to use the Hazard House, borrowed from the AEMA, saying it’s a great tool for teaching children. Most important though are the visits to the schools. “The students ask me a lot of questions and I also get many questions from their parents. This often translates into visits to their homes, where I can use my fire safety inspection checklist to point out all the hazards that can exist in a home.”

When talking to Dan about working with children, it is obvious that he truly cares about each and every one of them. Not surprising for a man who raised 10 children and two grandchildren on his own. Outside



Dan Kootenay teaching fire safety to students at Kitaskinaw School.

of his professional duties, Dan is also quick to share his knowledge and skills with others. “I often take my grandchildren to the wilderness or the lake and teach them about survival skills, everything from depth currents to different kinds of trees and what kind of wood smokes best for a fire. Before I take them, though, they have to earn the right by having good listening skills, which is an important skill for anyone.”

Dan also helps in other ways in his community. “In the city they have food banks, but we don’t have those in our community. Instead, I go hunting and fishing and share whatever I get with those who need it.”

When asked when he plans to retire, Dan laughs then says, “Everyone thought I’d retire when I turned 65. It used to be that the federal government would stop their portion after age 65, but now they’ve raised the limit to 70.” When asked what he’ll do in retirement, Dan was quick to reply, “I want to teach more to the next generation.” A very fitting goal for someone who truly cares about others and wants to help in whatever way he can.

In his spare time, Dan likes to travel south, especially to Mexico and South America. “I like to visit the people in those countries,” Dan explained. “I don’t like staying in cities.”

How apropos for a man who is proud of his second home located in the wilderness. 🔥

Professionals serving professionals

BY BILL PURDY, Alberta Fire Chiefs Association Executive Director



THE ALBERTA FIRE CHIEFS ASSOCIATION (AFCA) is moving forward with a number of projects. During a planning meeting in August 2008, the Board discussed involving other fire-related organizations to become members of AFCA. As a result, over the last year, a number of meetings were held with Partners in Protection, Alberta fire investigators and municipal emergency managers.

Another group that is being approached is the Alberta Fire Training Group. It was formed a number of years ago and mainly worked with fire departments and the Vermilion Fire Training School. The group has been somewhat inactive lately, and AFCA will be discussing how to best serve their needs.

Changewave, a company who assists organizations in applying for government funding, submitted a funding request to The Alberta Rural Development Fund. We had applied under the name Fire Link, requesting operating funds for an office and secretarial support. The Board of ARDF rejected our application, but didn't outright reject the application. Because of a freeze on funds by the province, not many non-profit organizations were approved. We will still be moving forward and at our last meeting it was encouraging that other avenues of funding will be investigated.

The AFCA conference for June 20 - 23, 2010 is moving forward with interest in the trade show and the various educational sessions for the three days.

Al Mercier, manager of the AFCA bookstore, Patrick Oslund, Clearwater Regional Fire Services, and I attended the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties (AAMD&C) spring conference in Edmonton. As the AAMD&C invited the AFCA to provide their delegates with a demonstration on some aspect of fire safety, we used the Clearwater Regional Fire Department's hazard house and a fire extinguisher training module. This was well received by the many delegates that visited our booth.

President Brian Cornforth, Vice President Al Schram and I also had a very productive meeting with the Minister of Municipal Affairs, Hector Goudreau. On the agenda for our meeting were critical issues since the provincial takeover of ambulances, including dispatching of first responders to



Patrick Oslund, Clearwater Regional Fire Rescue and Allen Mercier, AFCA at the AAMD&C conference in Edmonton.

assist ambulance personnel, the proposed radio system, the Fire Advisory Report and the report on 911. The minister promised to work with the AFCA to resolve our concerns. Further meetings may be necessary with Minister Goudreau and other provincial government ministers before the various concerns are met to our satisfaction, which includes the safety of our personnel and the people we serve.

The AFCA is moving forward with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Alberta Fire Commissioner's office in the retention and recruitment study. Volunteer Alberta has dedicated two staff members and will have a report for our conference in June. The former minister and the present minister are very supportive. 🔥

assist ambulance personnel, the



Patrick Oslund doing an extinguisher simulation.



Delegates watching the extinguisher and hazard house demos.

Master's program graduates another agency employee

Last issue, we mentioned that Len Hancock was the first graduate of the Masters in Emergency Management program at Royal Roads University.

This issue, we are proud to acknowledge another Alberta Emergency Management Agency employee who has also achieved the same degree – Mark Murphy, the agency's emergency management field officer in southern Alberta.

After 23 years in the military, Mark retired from the military and decided to change careers. Given his military background, the emergency management field interested him. "I had a lot of experience in the field, but felt that I should also get an educational background and academic knowledge about emergency management too," Mark advised. "I had applied for a year earlier admittance, but then had to defer that acceptance due to a knee injury. So by the time I started the program in April 2008, I was a very keen student."

For the first year, Mark and a cohort of about 40 students worked online on both team and individual projects. There were also two three-week periods where all the students attended classes at Royal Roads University in Victoria, British Columbia.

“He also shared his thesis with Volunteer Alberta to assist their efforts working with the Recruitment and Retention Committee's working group”

"It was an incredibly intense year," noted Mark. "Other than one week off between courses, every night plus one day of each weekend was spent doing research or meeting with other team members via phone or Internet. With team members situated across Canada, it was often a challenge just to coordinate times that worked for everyone."

After the first year coursework was completed, Mark felt like he got back about one-third of his life.

"The second year was devoted to researching and writing my thesis. To be successful at it, I first set up a work schedule and a deadline that I was working towards."

Mark's thesis focused on retention of volunteer firefighters in southern Alberta. "My original goal was recruitment and retention, but my advisor suggested that it was too broad a goal for the thesis.

So I then decided to focus on the retention aspect of volunteer firefighters," added Mark. "My work sponsor was Alberta Fire Commissioner Trent West, and he was a terrific supporter and mentor."

One of Mark's first steps was sending out a survey to all volunteer firefighters in southern Alberta, an area that stretched from the Crowsnest Pass to Medicine Hat and up to Arrowwood. "I received a fantastic response," stated Mark. "To round out the survey



Mark Murphy

information, I also visit 10 fire departments in the area and spoke to several people in each department, including the fire chief and firefighters."

Mark notes that although it involved a lot of driving around it was well worth it. "It was great to go out and meet volunteer firefighters and see the camaraderie that exists. I received a great welcome everywhere I went, and they were happy to talk about the issue and provide their input."

Although the graduation ceremony in Victoria isn't until June 18, 2010, Mark is excited for the event as his 85-year old mom will be there to watch him graduate. But before that, Mark is already busy applying what he has learned through the two-year program. He also shared his thesis with Volunteer Alberta to assist their efforts working with the Recruitment and Retention Committee's working group. As Mark sees it, leadership and staff relations can really make – or break – an organization. 🔥

Why follow a standard?

BY LISA BENINI, MBCP, CRM

THERE'S A LOT OF BUZZ about standards in the industry right now. So I thought it may be worthwhile taking a closer look at what we have in Canada. I may be biased, as I was a member of the technical committee for Canadian Standards Association (CSA) Z1600, a standard for the Emergency Management and Business Continuity Program, but I have spent many years in this industry attempting to follow 'some form of methodology' that could help get business continuity plans into place. Plus I saw what it took to get this standard ready for publication, and it was quite amazing.

Imagine this ... take about 30+ seasoned professionals in the emergency management and business continuity field and put them in a room and ask them to define "emergency management" or "business continuity." Depending on what side of the fence you were on, I suspect you would get quite a few different answers. Well that is what happened with this standard. Let me explain.

First of all, the Canadian contingent took the NFPA 1600 Standards as the basis for the Canadian Standard. There was a lot of debate about this as some organizations were international in nature and would have to comply with other standards in the countries where they had operations. However, since we are so closely attached to the United States, it didn't make sense to start from scratch to develop another standard. So we thought we would just "Canadianize" it by putting a few "eh"s at the end of sentences, and a couple of "u"s in certain words.

NOT happening ...! As we started to review the NFPA 1600 Standard we realized that there were some fundamental elements missing. We also knew that there was an effort happening internationally through ISO (International Organization for Standardization) to create a similar standard on what was known as "ISO/PAS 22399 Societal security – Guideline for incident preparedness and operational continuity management." As a result of

much discussion, the CSA Technical Committee for Z1600 decided to create a framework based on the ISO methodology and integrate the contents from NFPA 1600 into this framework. This was a tremendous undertaking but, looking back, very well worth the effort.

We also reviewed in great detail every single line and discussed how this would affect the typical 'business' across Canada. This standard had to apply to not only large corporations or governments but to small and medium sized businesses too, so it had to be flexible, workable and concise. We knew that some organizations would have great difficulties in meeting some of the statements within the standard, so a lot of attention went into the wording and building of a supporting annex section, which would provide some background to assist the *average company*.

There was a lot of debate regarding how you take two very distinct disciplines – **emergency management** and **business continuity** – that have worked separately in the past, and bring them together into one standard.

Let me tell you there were a lot of 'heated' discussions in this area. However, I am very proud of the work that came out of those discussions because we have enhanced the standard, for example business impact analysis, and allowed an organization the liberty to create one or many plans, depending on the size and complexity, by providing common plan requirements.

We also agreed that any program required certain elements:

- planning,
- implementation,
- exercises, evaluations and corrective actions, and
- management review.

Finally, the overall program management needs to ensure the organization is prepared with appropriate resources, and the plans are current and executable. So that's how we developed the CSA Z1600:2008 version.

“...a lot of attention went into the wording and building of a supporting annex section, which would provide some background to assist the *average company*.”

Since its release, I have used the standard to assess the readiness of many organizations through my consulting practice. I am very happy to see that many of them have done substantial work to achieve a good majority of the standard. Surprisingly, most of my clients were very pleased to see that they were very close to being compliant.

The other benefit of using the standard is that this has been a great marketing tool to move some gaps/shortcomings forward with an organization's management. This is especially true if your management is not totally sold on why you need so much time and money to build an emergency management and business continuity program.

In closing, I would ask that if you are stuck with getting activities going to develop a plan or plans for emergency management and business continuity, then get a copy of the CSA Z1600 Standard and assess where your organization is. Use a traffic light concept to determine whether you are 'green', 'yellow' or 'red'. Show your management the results and I bet that will get them going. Best of luck. 🔥

Here's the website for CSA Z1600 Standard for Emergency Management and Business Continuity Program: www.csa.ca/cm/ca/en/z1600-emergency-management

For more information, please contact:
Lisa Benini, MBCP, CRM of Benini Consulting Ltd.
at ltbenini@shaw.ca or phone: 250-813-2435

Partner organization prepared to help

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT the NGO Council of Alberta? It functions as a clearing-house for vetted, legitimate, non-profit resources that can be activated to assist residents across Alberta in times of need. The Council is poised to assist municipalities with delivery of needed support to their communities utilizing non-profit/volunteer agencies.

History

The Council was formed in 2000 under assumptions that:

- disasters or significant emergencies pose unique challenges for resource management
- uncontrolled mobilization and over response can be common challenges in disasters coordination of response can be significantly complicated

The Council supports Alberta municipalities in their response to major emergencies and disasters while reducing the possibility of duplication of effort among responding member organizations that comes from an uncoordinated response. The Alberta Emergency Management Agency is a founding affiliate member and key stakeholder who supports the efforts of the NGO Council of Alberta.

Guiding principles

The Council's guiding principles are:

- maintain a reliable, credible and respected Council for members, municipalities and other stakeholders to access and share information
- provide NGO Executive members to participate in the emergency response network committees and initiatives within Alberta where possible



- redirect calls to NGO Council members and other stakeholders for support and to provide assistance in times of disaster and emergencies within Alberta
- develop working relationships with other NGO members, municipalities and additional stakeholders
- broadly communicate NGO member capacity by maintaining a current *NGO Council Help Book* and website.

The Council's role during an emergency or disaster includes:

- broadly communicating and keeping abreast of responding NGO member efforts
- providing trained volunteers/NGO member agency staff, services and support to the emergency response network within Alberta where possible
- responding to requests for assistance (where capacity allows)

“The Council supports Alberta municipalities in their response to major emergencies and disasters...”

- being responsive to agency Memorandums of Understanding or other formal or informal agreements
- reducing duplication of effort where possible by maintaining regular communication with other NGO members and coordinating emergency management agency.

If the Government Emergency Operations Centre (GEOC) is activated and if requested, the council also staffs the assigned NGO Council seat. 🔥

For more information about the NGO Council, visit www.ngocouncil.com

Training series offered

One component of the NGO Council of Alberta is the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) Training Series.

For the month of April 2010, course offerings included Group Crisis Intervention and Grief Following Trauma.

For more information about upcoming courses, visit www.ngocouncil.com or email to chair@ngocouncil.com

Volunteer firefighters: in hot demand

RECRUITING AND THEN retaining volunteer firefighters is a challenge. The Alberta Fire Chiefs Association went to the experts about Alberta volunteers, Volunteer Alberta, to create a strategy to improve recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. Volunteer Alberta is developing the retention strategy after completing an environmental scan for the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association (AFCA) in 2009. The retention strategy is designed to help fire departments overcome barriers to volunteer firefighter recruitment and

retention. The accompanying tool kit will provide templates, how-to sheets and tips for implementing the recruitment and retention strategy.

The strategy consists of a two-pronged approach, using initiatives both on central and local levels. Identifying barriers faced by individual departments is the focus of a self-assessment tool included in the accompanying tool kit.

To ensure the strategy is effective and practical, Volunteer Alberta checks in with the AFCA Recruitment and Retention

working group, who provide feedback on the strategy and recommended tools. Implementing the feedback, Volunteer Alberta is currently focusing on creating the tool kit to reflect the recruitment and retention strategy. The tool kit can be easily adapted by local fire departments to carry out the strategic initiatives.

After the May approval by the AFCA Recruitment and Retention Committee, the strategy will be presented as a seminar at the AFCA Conference in Edmonton on June 22, 2010. 🔥

Transportation update

UN3475 and you



Amendment 6 of the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Regulation came into effect on February 20, 2008. The implementation of the amendment brought in some new UN numbers for use during transportation, one of which is UN3475, Ethanol and Gasoline Mixture, with more than 10% ethanol, Class 3, PG II. The use of this new UN number will help first responders to better identify a product that may present some inherent difficulties when dealing with a fire response incident. The use of this product is not new, but the implementation of a new UN number requires a quick review in dealing with dangerous goods incidents involving ethanol.

Ethanol is derived through the fermentation of starchy products such as corn. It is used as an additive by the petroleum industry to promote cleaner burning fuels. Specially manufactured vehicles can operate on E85 (85% ethanol)

which is in wide use in the United States. With the continued interest in the environmental impact caused by vehicle emissions, we could soon see it in use in Canada. Ethanol destined for use as fuel is denatured with gasoline so don't get any thoughts about living it up with a truckload of moonshine. Denaturing is completed by adding 5% unleaded gasoline which

is typically transported in rail and highway tanks resulting in a shipment of 95% pure ethanol.

Ethanol has some specific identifying characteristics and problems associated with extinguishing an ethanol fire. It burns with a red flame, unlike other alcohols, that emits very little smoke.

The more ethanol in the mixture the cleaner it will burn and vice versa. Ethanol remains flammable down to a 10% mixture. This means that a 10,000 litre spill requires more than 100,000 litres of water to render the product ineffective. The use of foaming

agents is widespread when dealing with carbon-based liquids. Many of these foams have been proven ineffective against a polar solvent such as ethanol. The solubility of ethanol in water prevents the foam from working as it does on carbon-based products. Tests have shown that a Type 3 application of the foaming agent is ineffective against ethanol. The best results have been using a foaming agent with alcohol resistant polymers in a Type 1 or Type 2 application.

Ethanol is transported using three main UN numbers:

- UN1203 Gasoline containing less than 10% Ethanol
- UN3475 containing greater than 10% Ethanol up to E85
- UN1987 for denatured Ethanol containing 95% pure product.

It is vital that first responders understand the obstacles in dealing with an ethanol-based fire. The better you know the product you are dealing with, the faster you will be able to adequately respond. The addition of the new UN number is one step in helping you complete your objective and stay safe. 🔥

Tests have shown that a Type 3 application of the foaming agent is ineffective against ethanol.

Family fire fright!

BY KYLIE-JANE DEGELING, Training Officer, Alberta Emergency Management Agency

When Cheryl and Bill Roberts tucked their children into bed one cold December evening, they felt warm, safe and secure. Their baby boy slept soundly in his crib, sharing a room with Grandma, who was visiting for Christmas. Their toddler and preschooler snuggled contentedly into their bunks, as they said goodnight to the 10-year-old boy who had recently joined them in their home.

They never imagined that around midnight they'd all be standing outside in the cold, watching a fire rip through their house in Sherwood Park, Alberta. The terror began when the 10-year-old entered their room and announced that the basement was on fire.

"Bill ran downstairs expecting to find a small fire, but a whole side of the basement was engulfed in flames and roaring towards him," Cheryl recalled. "When I saw how big the flames were, I realized there was no way the extinguisher I had would be enough," Bill added.

Without hesitating, Bill ran upstairs and yelled for everyone to get out. The first challenge was waking the sleeping kids.

"When I woke our two-year-old, he leapt out of bed straight away, but our four-year-old, who was in the top bunk, sat up and then went back to sleep again," Cheryl said.

"I grabbed the bunk bed and slammed it into the wall. That was the force I had to use to wake her up enough to come down. Then I ran down the hall to the crib and tucked our baby under my arms, grabbing a bag of photo negatives I had nearby. I was wearing only a t-shirt, no pants, and bare feet. But we ran out the door."

*Previously,
I never understood how
anyone could die in a fire –
but now I get it, because
it was so fast.*

"Previously, I never understood how anyone could die in a fire – but now I get it, because it was so fast. It was roaring through the house. You can actually feel the oxygen leaving. We could hear the fire burning under the floorboards as we ran down the hall," said Cheryl.

The entire family, including Grandma, was lucky to escape the fire without injury, and had a neighbour call 9-1-1. However, their home was completely gutted. Today, many years later, they still find it difficult to sleep at night.

One thing the family learned is that anyone can find themselves in a position where they need to evacuate. While they were able to save their precious negatives, they found themselves needing to borrow clothes from neighbours.

Today, they keep a pack in the car containing a change of clothes. They store negatives in a safety deposit box and back up digital images on CDs to be sure they won't lose their memories if they need to evacuate again.

Are you prepared to evacuate?

Whether it's a gas leak, toxic chemical spill, wildfire, house fire or severe storm, you may find yourself leaving home in a hurry. Follow these tips to prepare yourself for the unthinkable.

1. Important documents: Consider keeping a hardcopy of vital documents like birth certificates, citizenship papers, passports, home insurance certificates and home ownership deeds in a safe destination. A safety deposit box is a good location. Additionally, consider storing a copy of photographs and documents of secondary importance, like your home contents inventory, in the home of a relative. All documents and photographs can also be easily scanned, stored and encrypted onto a flash drive that you could wear on your keychain. Be sure to purchase one that can be encrypted though, to ensure your information doesn't fall into the wrong hands.

2. Baby's needs: If you have an infant, you'll need diapers, wipes, food and drink kept in a pack by the door. If you need to evacuate in the middle of the night, you won't want to be searching for these items.

3. Clothing: Keep a pack of fresh clothes for the family in your car in case you need to get away quickly.

4. Medication: If you or your family takes medication regularly, be sure to have at least a three-day supply handy.

5. Pet's needs: Determine the items you'd need if you were taking your pet on a vacation and have them ready to go at a moment's notice. A cage, food, water, medication, collar, and leash should start your list depending on your animal.

6. Food and water: Keep a stash of non-perishable food, like energy bars and bottles of water.

7. Contacts: Have a list of key contacts, like friends, relatives and coworkers, in your car's glove box. If you need to evacuate in a hurry, you have their details.

8. Cash: If you don't have a chance to grab your wallet, you'll be relieved to find a small stash of cash hidden somewhere in your car. Keep enough to tide you over until the banks open.

Finally, be sure to have a plan. Where should your family meet if evacuated? Is there a person you can use as a contact to relay your information if you become separated? Keep this information in your car, as well as on the refrigerator. Remember to practice and re-evaluate your evacuation plans with your family at least twice per year. The kids will think it's fun, and you can have the peace of mind that comes from knowing everyone is prepared. 🔥

For more information on hazards in Alberta, contact your municipality's director of emergency management or Alberta Emergency Management Agency at 780-422-9000 (Dial 310-0000 for toll-free access outside Edmonton) or visit www.aema.alberta.ca

Four steps to FireSmart planning: communities managing wildfire in Alberta

EACH FIRE SEASON, wildland fires are sparked in Alberta's natural spaces and the communities that intermingle with these spaces find themselves facing the threat of wildfire. FireSmart invites communities to address the reality of living with wildfire. By preparing for the inevitability of wildfire affecting your community, residents can help their community to build on its connection to natural spaces.

The *FireSmart Guidebook for Community Protection* introduced by Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (2009) is a four-step process to address wildfire reality. The planning guide is in draft format, being reviewed by professionals involved in wildfire mitigation and preparedness, and is scheduled for release in spring 2010.

Step 1: Identify the wildfire hazard and risk

The wildfire threat potential is based on characteristics of the forests surrounding the municipal area - including forest type, topography and weather patterns. Wildfire risk is assessed from the backyards of homes to the landscapes beyond. The potential threat of wildfire will determine the level and scope of FireSmart planning required.

A FireSmart community plan has two major components:

- Wildfire Preparedness Guide - operational wildfire suppression guide
- FireSmart Mitigation Strategy - risk management planning to decrease the wildfire threat.

Communities with a lower wildfire threat need only to complete the Wildfire Preparedness Guide. Communities with a high to extreme wildfire threat should undertake both the Wildfire Preparedness Guide and the FireSmart Mitigation Strategy.

Step 2: Identify and Convene Stakeholders

Formation of a local FireSmart Committee is crucial to the success of the FireSmart Community Plan. Committees can range from a few members to several representatives, depending on the scale and complexities of the community.

Step 3: FireSmart community planning

3A - Wildfire Preparedness Guide - operational user's manual in a wildland urban interface fire.

The *Wildfire Preparedness Guide* is a concise document for emergency responders to initiate operations when a wildfire is threatening a community. Stakeholders support this operational plan through legislation, Memorandum of Agreements and Mutual-Aid Fire Control Agreements which provide the mandates necessary to activate during a wildfire event. These plans act as complements to an Emergency Management Plan.

Major components of the Wildfire Preparedness Guide include:

- wildfire behaviour potential
- values at risk inventory
- wildfire strategies and tactics
- resource recommendations
- emergency contact list (of each involved agency).

3B - FireSmart Mitigation Strategy - long-term mitigation and prevention strategies specific to the community.

Actions to reduce the wildfire threat to an acceptable level are contained within the FireSmart Mitigation Strategy. Within the *FireSmart Guidebook for Community Protection*, each of the FireSmart disciplines is defined and gives recommendations for the "quick win" items to help the community build momentum. Highlights of these disciplines are outlined below.

Development - FireSmart provides recommendations for structural options and infrastructure options.

Education and Communication Options - FireSmart is only truly achieved when it is an attitude carried by the residents of a community. Consultation with the community is a crucial part of building a meaningful FireSmart Community Plan. A communications plan should support the FireSmart plan.

Legislation - recommendations for integrating FireSmart legislation into a Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaws.

Interagency Cooperation and Cross Training - A FireSmart Committee should meet at regular intervals to address topics of mutual interest and provide each other advice from their areas of practice.

Emergency Planning - The *Wildfire Preparedness Guide* provides the operational groundwork for emergency planning. This plan should complement the Municipal Emergency Plan and Mutual Fire Control Agreements.

Vegetation Management - assessed based on the most combustible vegetation and the vegetation in closest proximity to development.

Step 4: FireSmart community plan implementation and maintenance

Successful implementation of a FireSmart Community Plan takes commitment from the FireSmart Committee. The plan will outline areas of priority. The Wildfire Preparedness Guide should be updated annually; the FireSmart Mitigation Strategy requires a review every five years.

Having a FireSmart community is not a state of arrival but rather a state that is ever evolving as the community changes and grows. Implementing FireSmart can help communities address the reality of living with wildfire. 

For more information contact your local Wildfire Prevention Officer or contact Tracy Price, FireSmart Community Protection Specialist.
Phone: 780-644-3298, email: tracy.price@gov.ab.ca, website: Firesmart.alberta.ca



BY CHAD SARTISON, Volunteer Firefighter, Chairman, The Fire Within – chad@thefirewithin.ca

“Entitlement”

HAVE JUST RETURNED from a 10-day trip to Pennsylvania where I had the pleasure of visiting fire companies throughout the state. I spoke to a few of them, went on a call or two with some of them and had a beer or two with all of them.

As with everything in the United States, it is amazing how obviously different and yet strikingly similar our two countries often are. Perhaps there is no better illustration of this than while I was purchasing a U.S. iPhone (*insert rant about extortionate Canadian cellular company practices here*) in an Apple store in Lancaster when a lovely 80-year-old lady heard me paying with a Canadian credit card. As she approached, walker and all, she politely asked me how I like our “communist health care system.” Her words not mine.

My travels coincided with the passing of President Barak Obama’s new health care bill, so in a staunchly conservative state like Pennsylvania, it was difficult to walk 10 feet without somebody asking about Canadian healthcare.

I explained to her that, as a cancer survivor, I owed my life to our healthcare system and as such found it difficult to criticize. I expounded that there is much to be improved upon in our system, but in the end I could not imagine such a basic privilege like healthcare being withheld.

She politely grabbed my hand, smiled and said that she would pray for me. I think she was referring to my cancer and not my communist healthcare beliefs, but given the passion with their healthcare debate, I may never be sure.

So there, in the soft-spoken words of an 80-year-old lady, laid the primary difference between the Canadian and U.S. health systems, but perhaps more to the point of this article, the difference between the United States fire service and ours.

“Entitlement”

Generally, volunteer fire departments in the U.S. are called fire companies and they are actual companies, not government entities. They survive almost entirely on the donations of their communities. If they were not to offer good service or manage their books correctly, they would go bankrupt and the community would go unprotected. But, before we get ahead of ourselves, let me paint a picture for comparison in Pennsylvania.

Alberta covers 255,541 square miles (661.848 square kilometres), has approximately 390 volunteer

fire departments and 9,000 volunteer firefighters. In comparison, Pennsylvania is roughly one-fifth the size covering 46,055 square miles (119,282 square kilometres) and has approximately 2,300 volunteer fire departments and 70,000 volunteer firefighters.

The demographics are astounding, and why not? Pennsylvania’s first volunteer fire company was formed in 1736 by none other than Benjamin Franklin. Historically, departments were positioned roughly the distance at which a horse would get tired at full gallop each way. This is obviously largely impractical given today’s technology, but in a country where patriotism and tradition are valued above all, and with many volunteer fire companies approaching their 200th anniversary, the fire tradition definitely resists practicality.

The purpose of my trip was to expand the reach of *The Fire Within*, its calendar initiative and the principles that it stands for. I must admit to being surprised at how quickly and passionately fire companies embraced *The Fire Within* concepts of awareness and branding. Watching as they eagerly jostled to be the first departments photographed in the first U.S. calendar, it wasn’t long before I began to realize why.

At first blush, the departments I visited resembled ours here in Alberta in almost every way. Chiefs complained about the usual troubles with recruitment and retention of volunteers. They mused about the challenges with time and funding and the expanding pressures that come with the increased expectations of a modern day community. The key to this article, however, is our differences, not our similarities.

“The average call volume of the departments I visited was in excess of 500 calls per year. The number of members averages 30 - 40 firefighters per department, including their chief. All were 100% volunteer and would consider payment of any kind an insult to the traditions their companies were founded on.”

“For the most part, firefighters seem to understand that there is more to being a firefighter than just running into a burning building. Although I must admit at times they go begrudgingly, most times our firefighters happily go door-to-door checking smoke detectors, extolling the virtues of fire prevention and fundraising.”

The average call volume of the departments I visited was in excess of 500 calls per year. The number of members averages 30 - 40 firefighters per department, including their chief. All were 100% volunteer and would consider payment of any kind an insult to the traditions their companies were founded on.

Funding for both capital acquisitions and annual operational budgets comes, for the most part, from fundraising and community donations. One hall I visited managed to raise over \$900,000.00 for a new aerial platform from a community of 9,400 in just under four months. This was in addition to the usual \$250,000.00 raised annually to run the fire company.

For me, coming from a department in an affluent community where raising \$10,000.00 can be a two-year proposition and the reality of 80 to 90 calls a year at times seems an inconvenience, statistics like these seem unbelievable.

So, as I watch my department and others here in Canada push for greater volunteer remuneration and muse about calling ourselves “paid on-call or part-time firefighters,” I can’t help but wonder, what is the primary difference between our neighbors to the south and us here in the great white north?

In one word “entitlement”

As citizens, we feel entitled to the fire protection we receive. As volunteer firefighters, we feel entitled to the government funding required to provide it.

For the record, I feel that we are entitled to fire protection here in Canada. However, the reality is that our sense of entitlement has built apathy in our firefighters and, more importantly, in our public. This sense of entitlement has painted our beloved fire service into a corner that, as time goes on, is proving more and more difficult to get out of.

Although apathy and entitlement are growing in the United States, the simple fact remains that volunteers are responding to in excess of 500 calls a year and are raising hundreds of thousands of dollars annually from their communities. If they don’t, the alternative is simple – they won’t have a fire department, and let me tell you, out of necessity comes invention.

As independent fire companies, they understand the importance of community awareness, branding and education. They understand that in the absence of good customer service, balanced books and a meaningful connection with their community, 200 years of tradition would crumble underneath them, and no fire chief wants that to happen on his watch.


For the most part, firefighters seem to understand that there is more to being a firefighter than just running into a burning building. Although I must admit at times they go begrudgingly, most times our firefighters happily go door-to-door checking smoke detectors, extolling the virtues of fire prevention and fundraising. They are content in the knowledge that these activities will guarantee that their

fire company will be fighting fires 200 years from now. After all, when it comes down to it, they joined for the same reasons we joined and their fellow volunteers joined almost 200 years earlier – to make a difference in our community.

My hope in Canada is that even if my fellow departments don’t embrace *The Fire Within*, they will embrace the principles of community behind it. If we don’t, funding will continue to shrink and volunteers will grow more scarce.

It is a volunteer firefighter’s job to do a reasonable amount of fund raising as long as it values their time and relates to and educates the public they serve.

It is as much a volunteer firefighter’s job to promote fire safety and get in front of the children who will one day be volunteers themselves as it is to save them in their time of need.

It is the fire chief’s job to make sure that their firefighters know their job because, contrary to what we believe, there are plenty of volunteers out there wanting to be a part of something larger than themselves. They just may not know it yet! 

Providing flood advice and expertise for emergency responders

BY EVAN FRIESENHAN, M.Eng., P.Eng., Manager, River Forecast Team and Bryce Haimila, B.Sc. Manager, River Hazard Management Team, Alberta Environment

THE POTENTIAL FOR FLOODING exists along all rivers and streams in Alberta. Recent examples where significant flooding has affected communities include: major flooding in High River, Pincher Creek, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat in 1995; ice jam flooding in Fort McMurray and Peace River in 1997; and wide spread flooding in High River, Okotoks, Calgary, Sundre, Rocky Mountain House, Red Deer and Drumheller in 2005.

Flooding has the potential to cause damage to property, hardship to people and possibly result in loss of life.

How bad will the flooding be? How much time do we have? When will the river peak? Where will the flooding occur? When does flooding start? How does our current situation compare to previous events? What do you mean 'the next downstream community'?

These are some of the many questions posed to emergency responders leading up to and during a flood event. In Alberta, the responsibility for supporting emergency responders in answering these questions rests with Alberta Environment's River Forecast Centre (RFC). The RFC is responsible for maintaining situational awareness on current river conditions and developing short-term forecasts throughout the province as necessary during the year. The RFC communicates this information to stakeholders by posting Forecaster's Comments to the Alberta Environment web site on a routine basis and by issuing river advisories, watches and warnings as necessary.

Leading up to and during a flood event, the RFC will enter into 24-hour operations and assess hydrologic and meteorological data to produce forecasts of river flows and levels throughout the area at risk. Additionally,



Photo taken June 2005 – Sheep River near Okotoks

Alberta Environment will activate the Flood Response Coordination Centre (FRCC) to provide emergency responders with crucial context and information from the RFC during a flood event so that the associated emergency response is optimized.

Remotely-sensed data from multiple agencies is compiled and quality controlled by the RFC before it is available for use within the hydrologic models. The models are maintained by the RFC throughout the open water season. The models are updated and calibrated as necessary to ensure they are ready for use during an event anywhere in the province. Once the model results are available, they are reviewed by the Forecaster on Duty (FOD). The FOD assesses the model results and develops the forecast. This forecast is then

provided to direct contacts within affected areas and to the Forecasting Technical Representative within the FRCC who provides further context to emergency responders. Essentially the RFC takes scientific data from multiple sources and creates a forecast which is then further translated by the Forecasting Technical Representative within the FRCC to provide the information and context required by emergency responders.

This information includes the name of the flooding river, important reference locations along the flooding river, the current flow rate at that location, the forecast peak at that location, the forecast time at which that forecast peak is expected at that location, the impact at that location of the forecast peak and an indication of how the current event compares to previous similar flood events.

An example of the information provided to the FRCC is shown below.

Location		Forecast			Impact	
Where	River	Current Flow (cms)	Peak Forecast (cms)	Timing of Peak	Effect	Comparison
Priddis	Fish Creek	16 @ 09:30	94 observed	June 11, 16:45	Minor flooding	1995 = 84 cms peak
Medicine Hat	South Saskatchewan	847 @ 11:00	1,200 - 1,400 estimated	Evening of June 14	No Flooding. Additional rise in water level of ~ 1 meter	Over 1000 cms lower than the top ten flood events.

This table contains summary information that was issued to the FRCC on June 13, 2008 at 10:30 a.m. The first location has already peaked and the second has yet to peak at the time the table was issued. The summary information contains both the forecast as well as an indication of the resultant impact.

River Forecast information can be viewed on Alberta Environment's forecast website at www.environment.alberta.ca/forecasting

After a flooding event occurs further questions are asked. What are the damages? What is the risk of this happening again? How can we mitigate this risk?

Flood damages can represent one of the largest expenses for provincial disaster assistance compensation programs. Non-structural flood management strategies are the most effective way of reducing flood damages over the long term. Identifying and mapping areas susceptible to flooding are instrumental to the implementation of an effective provincial flood management strategy.

“Non-structural flood management strategies are the most effective way of reducing flood damages over the long term.”



Alberta Environment's River Forecast Centre in action during a flood event.

In Alberta, flood hazard mapping studies are produced under the Flood Hazard Identification Program. The primary objectives of this program are to promote the appropriate development of flood hazard areas, increase public safety through awareness of existing flood hazards and reduce future flood damages including the associated financial costs. Flood hazard studies are used for planning by all levels of government including local municipalities.

A variety of information is required for the production of a flood hazard study. This information would typically include available historic flood information, aerial photography, high water mark information, digital mapping and elevation models, river cross-section surveys and hydrologic data. Using

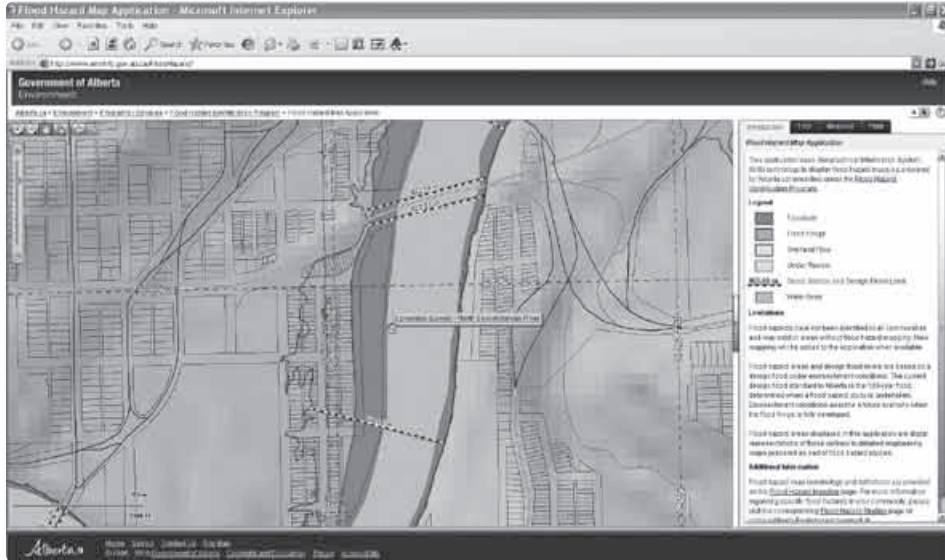
output from the resulting calibrated river hydraulic model, a flood hazard map showing the extent of inundation can be produced.

The flood hazard map depicted above shows the areas along the river that are expected to experience flooding

during the design flood event. Flood hazard information can be viewed on Alberta Environment's Flood Hazard Identification Program website at <http://environment.alberta.ca/1291.html>

Flooding is a very real possibility along any of Alberta's rivers and streams,

given the right conditions. In planning, preparing and responding to flood events, Alberta Environment provides technical advice and expertise to emergency responders to support them in assisting Albertans. 🔥



A bridge along the James River that was washed out during the flood event (June 2005).

Agency volunteer helps out with H1N1 clinics

Stepping in wherever needed

AS ANYONE WHO HAS EVER worked for or with emergency personnel can attest, the desire to help wherever help is needed is in their blood. Take for example, what occurred in Pincher Creek during this spring's H1N1 immunization campaign.

Ralph Bourque, a volunteer deputy director for the Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) and former fire chief for Pincher Creek, was one of many standing in line for his "shot." Nothing out of the ordinary there. But, when Ralph noticed that the crowd was starting to get out of hand, he approached one of the nurses to offer his assistance. After first receiving his own immunization, Ray quickly went to work organizing, directing and assisting people at the town hall. The next day, the AEMA sent out

a province-wide request to local emergency management agencies for assistance with the various immunization clinics.

Naturally, Ray, and his wife, continued their efforts. But they also went one step further. In addition to helping out on site, Ray checked in with the public health nurse at the hospital, collected each day's supplies and loaded them in his vehicle and delivered them to the clinic. He also locked the



clinic doors at the end of each day. Additionally, Ray organized a team of 16 community members to help out. 🔥

Live to ride another day

They're exciting and a wonderful way to enjoy the Alberta landscape. They are also a great way of getting around to do chores on the farm or acreage. But all-terrain vehicles – or ATVs – are more than a tool and are definitely not toys. The very power that makes them exciting and useful can make them deadly.

ATVs cause more injuries than any other consumer product. In Alberta in one year alone, there were about 780 hospital admissions for injuries related to ATVs and more than 5,800 emergency department visits.

“Most people who die in ATV crashes suffer a head injury,” said Kathy Belton, Associate Director of the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research. “One of the most important steps people can take to stay safe is to wear an approved ATV helmet that has face and eye protection.”

The provincial centre recently studied the available research on ATV-related injuries and learned that many crashes and injuries could have been avoided by following the seating limit of the ATV. “ATVs built for one person are harder to control and more likely to tip when a passenger tags along,” explains Belton. “We urge people to refuse to carry or be a passenger on an ATV that’s only built for one.”

“Many recommendations for safety on ATVs are straight-forward,” says Brent Hogdson, President of the Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association. “Alcohol or drugs simply don’t mix with ATVs. We must drive sober. Also, ATVs are harder to control than they appear. We need to take lessons to learn how to safely make turns, tackle hills and carry loads.”

Intoxication by drugs and alcohol has been implicated as one of the most pervasive risk factors in ATV injuries. Even slight intoxication increases both the likelihood of a crash and the likelihood that the injuries sustained will be more severe. Of the ATV fatalities in Alberta between 2002 and 2009, 55% of those checked for alcohol had tested positive – 72% of whom were over the legal limit.

“ATVs cause more injuries than any other consumer product. In Alberta in one year alone, there were about 780 hospital admissions for injuries related to ATVs and more than 5,800 emergency department visits.”

Organizations like the Alberta Off-Highway Vehicle Association and the Alberta Safety Council offer hands-on training that provides riders the special skills and practice they need. ATVs may look easy to operate, but it takes practice and experience to learn to navigate the terrain and situations that riders will come across.

When it comes to children and ATVs, the evidence is clear: children and youth do not have what it takes to ride safely. “Children have less strength, control, coordination and judgment than adults, which ultimately translates to a higher risk of injury and death,” added Belton. “In fact, people younger than 16 have a substantially greater risk of injury than someone over 16.” People younger than 16 accounted for 15% of all ATV-related deaths in Alberta between 2002 and 2009.

Safety advocates recommend that anyone under 16 years of age ride an ATV that is appropriate to their age, weight and maturity. Youth-size ATVs may reduce the risk of injury. Any rider under 16 should also have constant, close, visual supervision by a responsible adult. 🔥

Wildfires in Alberta

Off Highway Vehicles (OHV), which include ATVs, are capable of starting wildfires. Most commonly, the accumulation of combustible debris around the exhaust system is recognized as a fire hazard especially under dry conditions. According to Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, OHVs account for slightly more than one per cent of all human-caused wildfires in Alberta.

More information about ATV safety is available on the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research website at www.acicr.ualberta.ca or call 780-492-6019.

Codes and the fire service in Alberta

USUALLY WHEN MEMBERS of the fire service hear the word “code” in Alberta they focus on the Alberta Fire Code, currently the 2006 edition. When asked about the “Building Code” they, and many others, typically believe that the “Building Code” is a document of concern to contractors, carpenters, engineers, building inspectors, etcetera, but something of little concern to the fire community.

“... the building code should be seen as a critical component in not only the safety system as it applies to the normal occupants and residents, but also as it may apply to our firefighters as they conduct rescue and suppression operations.”

In terms of permits and construction activity under the *Safety Codes Act* this assumption is largely accurate. The general fire service’s involvement during this phase is usually limited to concerns about road access, hydrant location and, depending upon the structure, possibly the spatial separation, overhead utilities and water supplies.

Providers of building code services

In some accredited municipalities, the fire department’s safety codes officers have worked hard to establish an ongoing relationship with local building officials.

This could be the municipal building department, an agency contracted to the municipality or the agencies authorized by Alberta Municipal Affairs to provide building code services. This relationship provides the regular opportunity to discuss and review the above noted items along with fire protection and detection systems and recognizes the interrelationship between the fire service and the building code. The interrelationship is even more apparent to fire safety codes officers as they work with building operators to ensure that the equipment, systems and assemblies which were required by the building code at the time of construction (the Alberta Building Code has 1974, 1978, 1981, 1985, 1990, 1997 and 2006 editions) are maintained in accordance with the requirements of the Alberta Fire Code. While this interrelationship is vital it is also, unfortunately, the point at which consideration of the building code stops for most of the fire service.

It is unfortunate in the fact that the fire service is reliant upon the building code, and the designers, contractors and inspectors who use it, to provide the passive and active fire resistance, detection and suppression systems which support firefighting operations. The safety of firefighters during structural fire suppression and rescue operations (internal and external) is often dependent upon the structural integrity and performance of fire separations in addition to the functional operation of detection and suppression systems.

As an example there is mounting anecdotal and initial empirical evidence, most recently from the National Research Council

of Canada, that previous fire department assumptions about the structural integrity of combustible floor systems, such as those found in residential construction, need to be re-evaluated. These systems now predominantly consist of lightweight wooden truss or wooden I beams involving small (2 × 2, 2 × 3) dimensional lumber, metal friction connectors and/or OSB and glues/resins. The use of these engineered products allows for longer open spans, ease of mechanical/electrical installations, less material, greater consistent availability and quite often a reduced price. These builder/owner advantages are in direct contrast to traditional residential floor systems, which were dominant prior to the mid 90s, which use 2 × 10 or 2 × 12 fir floor joists usually supported by a multi thickness beam of similar material (or a steel or laminated beam) which required support posts.

Structural integrity under fire

With the solid floor joist construction system, it has been common for the floor’s structural integrity to be minimally impaired during and even after significant fire involvement (depending upon the size and location of the fire). In addition these systems generally resist ignition for a longer period than those built of lighter materials. Lightweight wooden truss or I beam systems on the other hand quite often show significant reductions in structural integrity under fire conditions which may present a hazard for those performing fire and rescue operations.

The purpose of this article is not to advocate for elimination of lightweight wood floor systems. It would appear that, if these structural systems are provided with passive or active fire protection, they may provide similar structural integrity to traditional systems. Testing currently being conducted by the National Research Council of Canada will provide an empirical evaluation of these types of protection.

Rather the purpose is to point out that the building code should be seen as a critical component in not only the safety system as it applies to the normal occupants and

“Since the development of the 1997 Alberta Building and Fire Codes it has been expected that Albertans who wish to propose changes to the provincial codes would do so during the development of the National Model Codes.”

residents, but also as it may apply to our firefighters as they conduct rescue and suppression operations.

Evaluating and revising

During the process of evaluating and revising codes and standards, the fire service has traditionally focused on the provision of the fire code. This is understandable as the fire service has concentrated much of its efforts in public education and prevention on the correct premise that the fire that does not start is one more that does not require extinguishment. The fire code focuses on methods to reduce risk by minimizing hazardous behaviours, separating fuel and ignition sources, separating fuel packages or dangerous goods from each other, providing extinguishers or special systems and requiring owners and properly qualified persons to maintain buildings and systems. These are necessary requirements and much work remains as the fire code evolves to fill reasonable gaps, improve application and foster consistency and owner education. The work of the fire service, particularly the safety codes officers who use the code regularly, is invaluable in this process and appreciated by all involved.

However the work of developing and evolving the building code must also become a focus of the fire service, both from the focus of suppression as well as firefighter safety. A small number of dedicated fire service professionals across the province understand the importance of the “built

environment” to fire and life safety, for occupants and firefighters and provide their time and input.

However these individuals are few in numbers. In reviewing previous input in to the process to revise the national and provincial building codes it appears that there have been very few change proposals and requests submitted by the Alberta fire service. The fire service should not be relying on designers, contractors and developers to determine the built environment of tomorrow.

A harmonised process

With new versions of the building and fire codes on the horizon (national in late 2010, provincial in 2012), it is time for long term proposals for change to be considered, discussed and submitted. In Alberta, where the National Model Codes are utilised as the base documents for code development, there is often a misunderstanding of the process. As we work to maintain a harmonised process of code development in Canada it is critical to remember that changing the Alberta code to something significantly different from the national model is both difficult and discouraged. The National Model Code process involves the efforts of 10 National Research Council working committees drawn from stakeholder groups across Canada. These efforts are guided by the Canadian Council on Building and Fire Codes and the Provincial/Territorial Program Advisory Committee on Codes. As such considerable submission, research, discussion and expertise, along with public policy consideration, goes into the development of the model codes.

Since the development of the 1997 Alberta Building and Fire Codes it has been expected that Albertans who wish to propose changes to the provincial codes would do so during the development of the National Model Codes. While this has been the public and published expectation the practice of the fire service in Alberta has been either to assume that someone else will be looking after the issues or that they will wait until the national model is done and then submit changes for the subsequent

Alberta version, often with little success. There are some matters covered by Alberta codes that are either not covered in the national model or where Alberta changes have been completed ahead of the model code cycle.

Keeping occupants and firefighters safe

In conclusion, if the fire service in Alberta, both prevention and suppression focused, wishes to develop the code it requires to keep occupants and firefighters safe, it must:

- ask inspectors and firefighters what is missing/wrong or confusing in the codes? What should be there?
- recognize that additions or changes to code is not a quick process. While Alberta Municipal Affairs and the Safety Codes Council’s Fire and Building Sub-Councils will be reviewing the provincial codes over the next year any major and significant changes are best addressed through the national model code process. This means that proposed changes for the 2015 National Fire and Building Codes should be in the process of development in the near future.
- pay attention to both the national and provincial code development and revision processes.
 - national code change submission processes are outlined at: www.nationalcodes.ca/request_contact_e.shtml
 - provincial code change submission processes are outlined at: <http://municipalaffairs.alberta.ca/documents/ss/STANDATA/building/GuidelinesandForm.pdf>
- work with local, regional, provincial and national stakeholder groups from across the representation matrix to develop common goals and proposals that have wide support from within and outside the fire service (AFCA, CAFC, AUMA, AFCA, AFSA, ABOA, etc.).
- work with industry associations to ensure that clear understanding of proposed changes exists within the industry.
- Utilise the resolution processes at stakeholder conferences and meetings to generate support and understanding.
- Ensure informed representation on Safety Codes Council and National Research Council Working Committees. 🔥

Live the learning experiences expanded

Post-secondary inclusion has proved to be a successful experience for two Lakeland students and others at the college. Student Erin Acton began her studies in the event coordinator program in the fall of 2007. Her long-term goal is to be self-employed and to own a business. Jessica Morrell, a student in the animal health technology program, also began in 2007 and wants a career working with animals.

Both Erin and Jessica receive instructional supports from Jill Applegate, post-secondary inclusion coordinator at Lakeland. Working with program chairs and faculty, Applegate supports students to identify learning objectives for labs and assignments and makes modifications so that the students' course work aligns with their career goals. She also helps facilitate volunteer opportunities for Erin and Jessica so that they develop relationships with others outside of the classroom.

"The cooperation of the program chairs and faculty have made the learning experiences for Erin and Jessica, as well as for other



Dr. Terri Rowat instructs Jessica Morrell about how to position a cat for an x-ray during a radiology lab at the Vermilion campus.

students and myself, very positive," said Applegate. "They've been great to work with." Program faculty also note other dynamics that have developed as a result of having Erin and Jessica in their classes.

Dr. Terri Rowat, animal health technology program chair, says her students have been able to develop an appreciation of different learning styles and patience with each other.

Laurie Harris, an instructor in the event coordinator program, added that her classes have also benefited from being involved with the inclusion project as it has demonstrated that experiences at the college level help to expand opportunities for all students.

Last month, the Alberta Association for Community Living recognized Lakeland College with an award for its support of post-secondary education and its two students. While the award is greatly appreciated, Applegate emphasized that the real reward is seeing the students learn new skills that will help them to successfully prepare for careers in their chosen area. "Everyone who has been a part of this experience has learned a lot about what it takes to make post-secondary inclusion work. It takes everyone working together," added Applegate. 🔥

Library resources update

New videos available for borrowing

The following new videos are available in DVD format from the Alberta Government Library, Labour Building site at 10808 - 99 Avenue, 3rd floor in Edmonton. For more information contact the library at 780-427-4671 or check out their online catalogue of fire safety collection at: <http://employment.alberta.ca/1733.html>

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB)

DVD Colour 30min 2010

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada (TSB) is an independent agency that makes transportation safer by investigating marine, pipeline, rail and air transportation accidents and communicating the results to Canadians. This corporate video showcases how the TSB conducts its investigative work and responds at the onset of an accident. The video is accompanied by a series of nine detailed fact sheets that describe the nine transportation safety issues that pose the greatest risks to Canadians.

Safety Smart Science – Fire, with Bill Nye the Science Guy

DVD Colour 25 min 2009

Safety Smart Science with Bill Nye the Science Guy explores the science of safety by going behind the scenes at Underwriters Laboratories and discovering how products are fire-tested to ensure they meet safety standards. The narrator ignites learning as he shows students how to be *Safety Smart* around fire by explaining the science of fire, including the roles heat, fuel and oxygen play. The program is suitable for children in Grades 4 - 8.

In addition to the video program, this classroom edition features: interactive safety smart quiz, scene selection,

downloadable educator's guide, web links to additional resources, bonus featurettes, and classroom activities.

Safety Smart about Fire – Timon and Pumbaa

DVD Colour 12min 2009

"Get down, get out and stay out!" That's just one of the lessons Timon and Pumbaa share to help students understand what to do in a fire emergency. From smoke alarms, fire escape plans, and preventative measures such as not playing with matches, Timon and Pumbaa review their *Safety Smart* checklist full of valuable life-saving fire safety information. The program is suitable for children in Grades K-3. 🔥

Digest

In memoriam

Saying goodbye to Allan Goodwin

For those of you who knew Allan Goodwin from Alberta Health Services, it is with profound sadness that we note his passing on April 9, 2009 due to complications from surgery.

Allan was very involved with the Alberta Emergency Management Agency as he sat on both the Fire Emergency Services Training Initiative Steering and Project

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Advisory Committees. He also worked with Alberta Emergency Management Agency staff to register individuals for courses at the Canadian Emergency Management College. At the agency's PD Day on October 15, 2009, Allan and his colleague Heather Johnston gave a very enlightening and informative presentation on EMS Preparedness and Partnerships.

* * * * *

Keeping the memory alive

The sad passing of Gloria Mercer-Koesling resulted in some very positive steps taken by others. Such is the case with Gerold "Jerry" Koesling, Gloria's brother-in-law. "This year, for the first time, I am participating in the *"Ride to Conquer Cancer."* I am doing this in memory of my sister-in-law, Gloria Mercer-Koesling," said Jerry. "Previously, I had thought about participating in the *Ride to Conquer Cancer* but after Gloria passed away, I knew I had to do something, so I registered right away."

The 200 km two-day ride takes place on June 26 and 27, 2010 in Calgary and goes through some of Alberta's most spectacular scenery, the majestic Rockies. To be able to participate each rider must raise a minimum of \$2,500 in sponsorship funds. All funds stay in Alberta and are used to fund the Tom Baker Cancer Centre, the Cross Cancer Institute and 15 other cancer centres in Alberta.

For more information about the Ride to Conquer Cancer or to donate to Jerry's efforts, google "conquercancer.ca 2010," click on the Alberta link, then go to "Donate now" and type in "Gerold Koesling."

If you know of something happening within the fire or emergency services field in Alberta, please email the information to us at aema.gov.ab.ca. Please use Alberta On Scene in the subject line.

2010 Strathcona Fallen Firefighters' Memorial Training Symposium

Following the success of the 2009 training symposium that was held October 1 - 4, 2009, The Strathcona Fallen Firefighters' Memorial Training Foundation is proud to announce the return of the Nobody Gets Left Behind (NGLB) Training Group as they join forces with Dave McGrail, District Chief, Denver Fire Department and author of Firefighter Operations in High-Rise and Standpipe Equipped Buildings. They will present at the 2010 Strathcona Fallen Firefighters' Memorial Training Symposium that takes place on September 30 - October 3, 2010 at Festival Place in Sherwood Park, Alberta.

More than just concepts, the NNLGB Training Group will provide four days of realistic scenario and interactive based training for all ranks.

For more information about the symposium or to register, visit: www.strathconaguard.com/strathcona_memorial_foundation_up_and_coming.htm

Bill 6 amends Emergency Management Act

The Alberta Legislature's recent passing of Bill 6, the *Emergency Management Amendment Act 2010* is good news for search and rescue groups. The bill supports these groups with liability protection when acting in good faith and enables them to deliver emergency services regionally.


In sponsoring the bill, Alberta Municipal Affairs parliamentary assistant Manmeet Bhullar, MLA for Calgary-Montrose pointed out that search and rescue groups are an important partner in the emergency management system. "We need to make sure that search and rescue groups will be there when needed, and we need to do what we can to protect these people when they are helping Albertans."

The act also focuses on delivering emergency services regionally, making it easier for communities to work together during an emergency. It is also designed to ensure Albertans have the same access to emergency services no matter where they live.

The Fire Within recent announcements

Once again, *The Fire Within* arranged for 30 firefighters from participating departments to attend FDIC (Fire Department Instructors Conference) in Indianapolis, Indiana, April 18 - 24. Firefighters from the following Alberta fire departments attended along with firefighters from four other provinces: Bow Island, Vegreville, Cochrane, Irricana, High River, Morinville, Mayerthorpe, St. Paul, Priddis, Swan Hills, Lacombe, Hanna and Strathmore.

Check out what's happening on The Fire Within's blog featured on Firefighting In Canada's website at www.firefightingcanada.com. For more information on FDIC and what it is, visit www.fdic.com

ALSO ... *The Fire Within* is currently accepting fire departments to be featured in the 2011 edition of the calendar. If your department hasn't signed up yet, call 1-866-HERO-911 to get involved! 

...And they say we only fight fires!

BY TRUDI SMITH

A FEW WEEKS AGO I stopped in at Taber Emergency Services to drop off their Virginia Farm Machinery Extrication Certificates. As I was walking in, Deputy Chief Mike Bos was in a hurry to walk out. His parting words were, “sorry, going on a call!” The only thing wrong, though, was the big smile on his face.

A question immediately came to mind – was he really going on a call, or was he just going for coffee?

I looked at the secretary and she was smiling too. She quickly informed me that, yes, he really was going on a call. Taber EMS was requested to assist with getting a cat out of a tree.

Well needless to say, I couldn't miss that kind of photo opportunity. As you can see through these photos, the outcome was great! 🐾



Taber Emergency Services Deputy Fire Chief Mike Bos and his crew discussing strategy.



Firefighters to the rescue.



Happy ending, successful rescue. All in a day's work!

Alberta On Scene is published by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency for the information of fire/emergency management professionals and others with a related interest in this field.

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of AEMA or the Government of Alberta. Your comments and suggestions are encouraged.

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